Washington Office Correspondence Manual

National Park Service

October, 1999

Contents

Introduction

1. Style

- 1.1. Letters
- 1.2. Memoranda
- 1.3. Electronic Mail
- 1.4. File Codes and File Copies
- 1.5. Enclosures, Attachments, and Attached Files
- 1.6. Copy List (cc's and bcc's)
- 1.7. Credit Line (Identification Information)
- 1.8. Inside Address, Salutation, Closings, and Titles
- 1.9. Surnames
- 1.10. Electronic Mail
- 1.11. Spelling, Hyphenation, Punctuation

2. Instructions for specific correspondence types

- 2.1. Drafts
- 2.2. Director's Correspondence in Final
- 2.3. Secretarial Correspondence in Final
- 2.4. Congressional Correspondence in Final

3. Controlled Correspondence Process

- 3.1. What is controlled correspondence?
- 3.2. How is the mail sorted into controlled and non-controlled correspondence?
- 3.3. Which mail becomes controlled correspondence?
- 3.4. Which mail does not get controlled?
- 3.5. What happens to controlled correspondence in Washington?
- 3.6. Who answers controlled correspondence?
- 3.7. What happens to controlled correspondence once it gets to the Action Office?
- 3.8. What if the correspondence doesn't belong in my office?
- 3.9. Does all controlled correspondence require a response?
- 3.10. How much time do I have to respond to controlled correspondence?
- 3.11. I can't put together a full response in time. Should I use an interim reply?
- 3.12. I've been assigned to prepare a draft response. What do I do?
- 3.13. Who is responsible for proofreading outgoing correspondence?
- 3.14. How does Secretarial correspondence get signed?
- 3.15. What if my letter needs to be surnamed by another bureau?

Director's Order #5, Correspondence and Internal Communications

Introduction

The National Park Service is highly dependent on all forms of communication in the performance of its mission. Director's Order #5, "Correspondence and Internal Communications", establishes the basic responsibilities, authorities, and policies regarding all correspondence. This manual contains instructions and information on correspondence that is sent from the Washington office.

Since the old correspondence manual, NPS-5, was released in 1995, several things have happened that required the changes that you see in this manual. First, the new directives system of Director's Orders and handbooks replaced the old system of numbered guidelines and special directives. This new system required that a Director's Order be written to cover all major Servicewide issues related to correspondence, and for specific instructions and policies to be placed in an accompanying handbook. Because Director's Order #5 allows Associate and Regional Directors to develop their own styles for correspondence in their areas, this manual is only required for correspondence under the signature of the Director or the Deputy Director(s), or at the Departmental level. However, all offices are encouraged to use this manual as a guide for correspondence.

Second, the new correspondence medium of electronic mail, including both internal mail and Internet mail, has grown tremendously in the last few years. Increasingly, correspondence with all types of people and organizations is moving from paper to electronic mail. Director's Order #5 and this manual give detailed instructions on when and how to use electronic correspondence.

Third, word-processing is now universally used in the creation of correspondence. This change affected several areas of this manual. For example, in the past, where there were extensive instructions on how to produce and send a draft letter, drafts are now simply sent as word-processing documents. In the past, authors and writers relied on paper dictionaries and style manuals as guidance for spelling, grammar, and hyphenation. Today most people now rely primarily on the spelling and grammar checks built into their word-processing software. At present there are no government-wide correspondence or style manuals, and the 1984 Government Printing Office Style Manual is now considered very outdated even by the GPO itself and does not cover many areas of correspondence styles. Therefore, this revision of the Washington Office Correspondence Manual allows the use of word-processing tools, along with the GPO Styel Manual and other style manuals, for guidance.

This manual was authored and is maintained by the Washington Administrative Program Center, reporting to the Associate Director for Administration.

1.0 Style

All correspondence at the signature level of the Director and above is **REQUIRED** to adhere to the following style guidelines. For lower level correspondence, the following may act as an example, but specific style guidelines are up to the discretion of regional directors.

1.1 Letters

File code (orgcode)
- Does not appear on original for letters to be signed by the Secretary

Font
- Courier 10 **or**
- Times New Roman 11 or 12

Inside Address (see 1.8)
- No line longer than 4"

No typed date
- Date will be stamped on correspondence after it has been signed

Salutation (see 1.8)

Ragged Edge
- Do not right justify

Paragraphs
- Single spaced
- Blank space between paragraphs

Margins
- 1" on left and right
- 1" on top and bottom

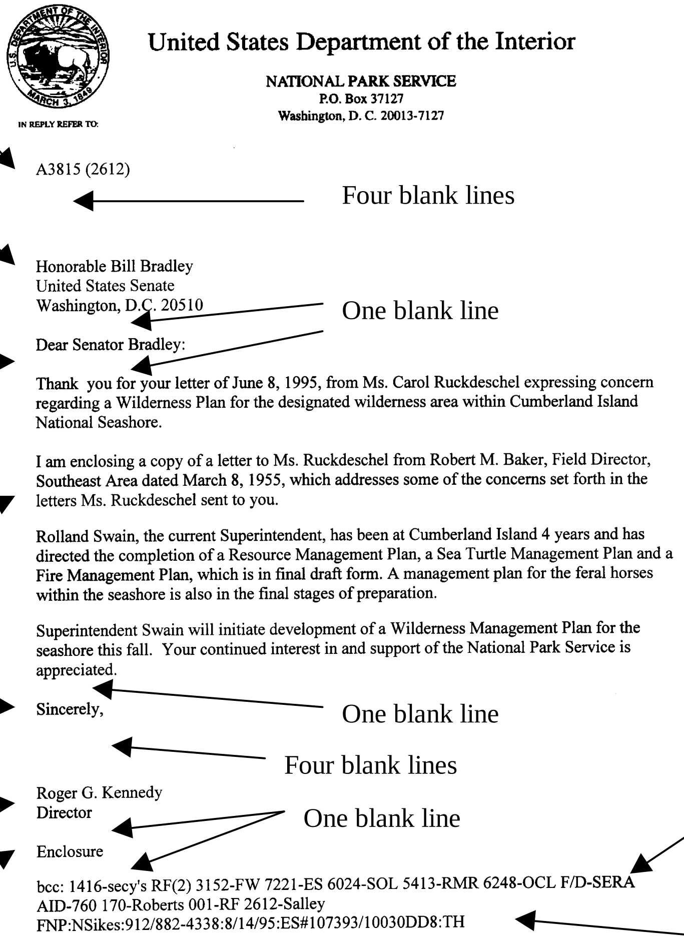
Complimentary Close (see 1.7)

Signature Block (see 1.9)

Copy list (see 1.6)

Enclosure (see 1.8)

Credit line (see 1.7)



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D. C. 20013-7127

IN REPLY REFER TO:

A3815 (2612)

Four blank lines

Honorable Bill Bradley
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

One blank line

Dear Senator Bradley:

Thank you for your letter of June 8, 1995, from Ms. Carol Ruckdeschel expressing concern regarding a Wilderness Plan for the designated wilderness area within Cumberland Island National Seashore.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter to Ms. Ruckdeschel from Robert M. Baker, Field Director, Southeast Area dated March 8, 1955, which addresses some of the concerns set forth in the letters Ms. Ruckdeschel sent to you.

Rolland Swain, the current Superintendent, has been at Cumberland Island 4 years and has directed the completion of a Resource Management Plan, a Sea Turtle Management Plan and a Fire Management Plan, which is in final draft form. A management plan for the feral horses within the seashore is also in the final stages of preparation.

Superintendent Swain will initiate development of a Wilderness Management Plan for the seashore this fall. Your continued interest in and support of the National Park Service is appreciated.

One blank line

Sincerely,

Four blank lines

Roger G. Kennedy
Director

One blank line

Enclosure

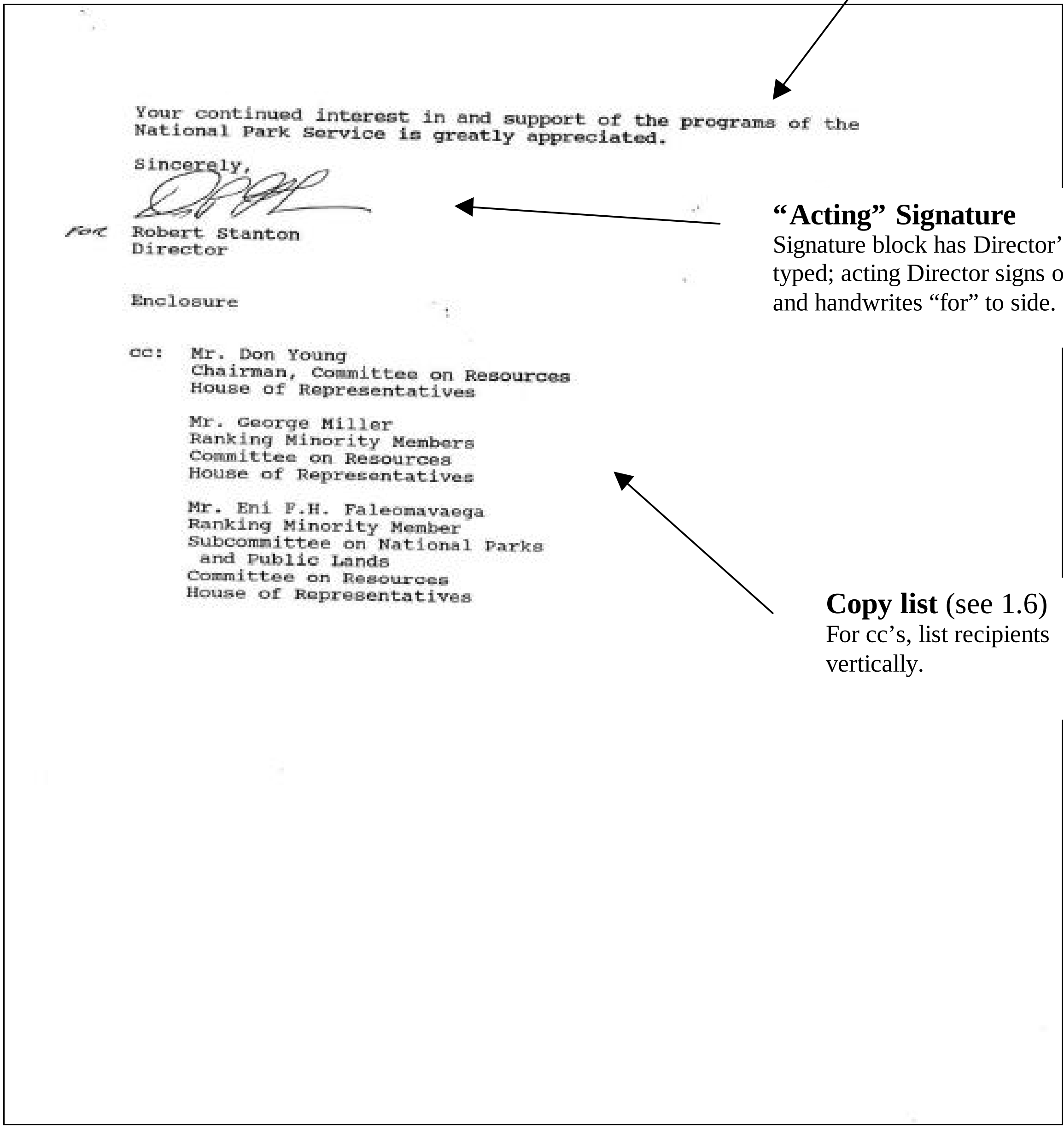
bcc: 1416-secy's RF(2) 3152-FW 7221-ES 6024-SOL 5413-RMR 6248-OCL F/D-SERA
AID-760 170-Roberts 001-RF 2612-Salley
FNP:NSikes:912/882-4338:8/14/95:ES#107393/10030DD8:TH

Letters

The second page of a two-page letter is shown below.

No Page Number
Continuing pages do not need a page number.

Two Lines of Text
There must be at least two lines of text on the second page.



Your continued interest in and support of the programs of the National Park Service is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

For Robert Stanton
Director

Enclosure

cc: Mr. Don Young
Chairman, Committee on Resources
House of Representatives

Mr. George Miller
Ranking Minority Members
Committee on Resources
House of Representatives

Mr. Eni F.H. Faleomavaega
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on National Parks
and Public Lands
Committee on Resources
House of Representatives

"Acting" Signature
Signature block has Director's name typed; acting Director signs own name and handwrites "for" to side.

Copy list (see 1.6)
For cc's, list recipients vertically.

1.2 Memoranda

Alignment

- Names and subject should line up vertically (use tab key, not spaces)

File Code

Format is: file code (org code)

Memorandum Line

- Left justified for memos within NPS
- Centered and capitalized when addressed to Dept.

"To:" line

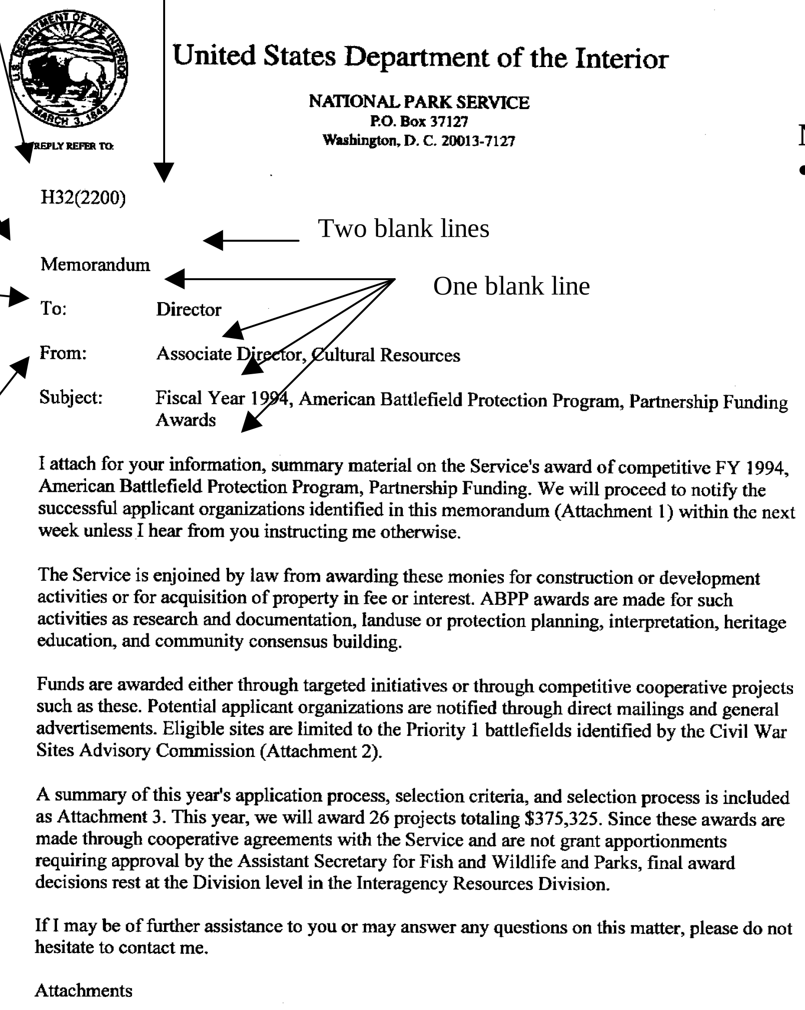
- Complete title of addressee used
- Multiple addressees listed vertically with each title beginning on a new line

"From:" line

- Do not use "the" before titles

"Through:" line

- Used when sending a memo through an intermediate office for approval,
- Typed below the To: line



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D. C. 20013-7127

REPLY REFER TO:

H32(2200)

Memorandum

To: Director

From: Associate Director, Cultural Resources

Subject: Fiscal Year 1994, American Battlefield Protection Program, Partnership Funding Awards

I attach for your information, summary material on the Service's award of competitive FY 1994, American Battlefield Protection Program, Partnership Funding. We will proceed to notify the successful applicant organizations identified in this memorandum (Attachment 1) within the next week unless I hear from you instructing me otherwise.

The Service is enjoined by law from awarding these monies for construction or development activities or for acquisition of property in fee or interest. ABPP awards are made for such activities as research and documentation, landuse or protection planning, interpretation, heritage education, and community consensus building.

Funds are awarded either through targeted initiatives or through competitive cooperative projects such as these. Potential applicant organizations are notified through direct mailings and general advertisements. Eligible sites are limited to the Priority 1 battlefields identified by the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission (Attachment 2).

A summary of this year's application process, selection criteria, and selection process is included as Attachment 3. This year, we will award 26 projects totaling $375,325. Since these awards are made through cooperative agreements with the Service and are not grant apportionments requiring approval by the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, final award decisions rest at the Division level in the Interagency Resources Division.

If I may be of further assistance to you or may answer any questions on this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Attachments

Two blank lines

One blank line

No Typed Date

- Date will be stamped after memo has been signed

Paragraphs

- Single spaced
- Blank space between paragraphs

Font

- Courier 10 **or**
- Times New Roman 11, 12

Margins

- 1" left and right
- 1" top and bottom

No signature block

Signature should be next to "From" line

1.3 Electronic Mail

Style should generally follow the guidelines for letters with the following exceptions:

yped Email Header

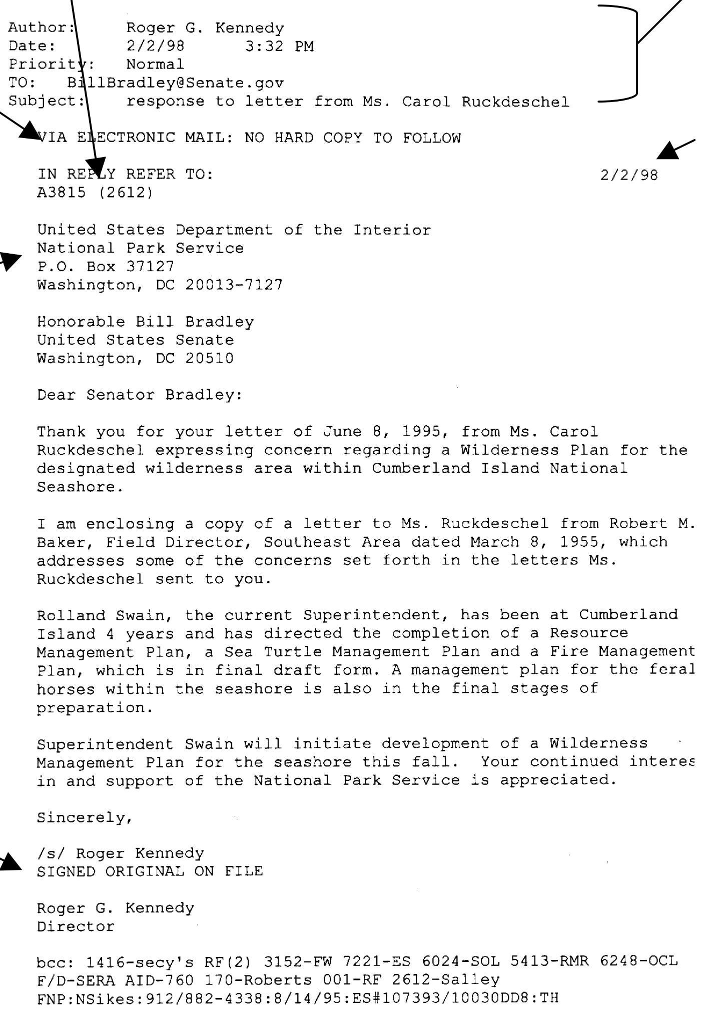
- "VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: NO HARD COPY TO FOLLOW" typed at top of message
- Do NOT use scanned letterhead logo (creates too large a file).

File Code (orgcode)

Needed on email as well as paper

Software email header

Generated automatically by email software.



Author: Roger G. Kennedy
Date: 2/2/98 3:32 PM
Priority: Normal
TO: BillBradley@Senate.gov
Subject: response to letter from Ms. Carol Ruckdeschel

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL: NO HARD COPY TO FOLLOW

IN REPLY REFER TO: 2/2/98
A3815 (2612)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, DC 20013-7127

Honorable Bill Bradley
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bradley:

Thank you for your letter of June 8, 1995, from Ms. Carol Ruckdeschel expressing concern regarding a Wilderness Plan for the designated wilderness area within Cumberland Island National Seashore.

I am enclosing a copy of a letter to Ms. Ruckdeschel from Robert M. Baker, Field Director, Southeast Area dated March 8, 1955, which addresses some of the concerns set forth in the letters Ms. Ruckdeschel sent to you.

Rolland Swain, the current Superintendent, has been at Cumberland Island 4 years and has directed the completion of a Resource Management Plan, a Sea Turtle Management Plan and a Fire Management Plan, which is in final draft form. A management plan for the feral horses within the seashore is also in the final stages of preparation.

Superintendent Swain will initiate development of a Wilderness Management Plan for the seashore this fall. Your continued interes in and support of the National Park Service is appreciated.

Sincerely,

/s/ Roger Kennedy
SIGNED ORIGINAL ON FILE

Roger G. Kennedy
Director

bcc: 1416-secy's RF(2) 3152-FW 7221-ES 6024-SOL 5413-RMR 6248-OCL
F/D-SERA AID-760 170-Roberts 001-RF 2612-Salley
FNP:NSikes:912/882-4338:8/14/95:ES#107393/10030DD8:TH

Date

- Typed where stamp would normally be used

Office Address

- Typed in lieu of printed address on stationary

Body of Message

- Simple layout
- No bolds, underlines, special fonts, tables, etc. (these do not translate well to other software applications)
- Do not use more than one screen color-this distinction cannot be kept when printed

Signature

- /s/ or /s/ACTING: followed by typed name in place of signature
- "SIGNED ORIGINAL ON FILE" placed immediately below signature

If Correspondence is Large or Must Use Special Features…

- Use a cover message
- Send as an attached file, using current standard format for transmission of word processing files

1.4 File Codes and File Copies

File codes and file copies are a critical part of the National Park Service records management system. The file code links a piece of correspondence to the National Park Service records schedule, which states whether or not the correspondence will be kept permanently, or disposed of in a few years.

- All correspondence must contain an official NPS file code on the top left hand side, followed by the orgcode of the originating office in parenthesis.
- The file code should be drawn from the official National Park Service Records Disposition Schedule. File codes contained in an approved park, regional, or other customized file code system that has been developed as a detailed or customized version of the official NPS Records Disposition Schedule can also be used.
- An official NPS file copy of all correspondence signed by the Director should be created and sent to WAPC for filing in the NPS central files after signature. Customarily this has been on yellow paper and is known as the "yellow copy", however, it is perfectly acceptable to use white paper with hand notation of "yellow" or "official file copy" on the top. This copy should be the one with original surnames on the right side.
- Other file copies may be created and maintained in other locations as determined necessary or prudent by the originating office.

1.5 Enclosures, Attachments, and Attached Files

- Paper material accompanying a paper letter is identified as an "Enclosure."
- Paper material accompanying a paper memorandum is identified as an "Attachment."
- Electronic files accompanying a piece of electronic correspondence are identified as "Attached Files".
- The words "Enclosure", "Attachment", or "Attached File" should be typed at the bottom of a piece of correspondence, below the signature but above the copy list. It appears on all copies of the correspondence (including bcc's).
- Attached files on email correspondence sent within the National Park Service should be in the current National Park Service standard for document transfer. Attached files on email correspondence sent outside the Service should be in a format mutually agreed upon by the sender and recipient.
- Attached files in general should not exceed about 100K in size, unless the sender is absolutely certain that the recipient can receive large files. Attachments to email correspondence that are sent to parks should never exceed 100K, as many park locations have limited telecommunications capacity and large files clog their incoming email. Large attachments should be compressed using the current NPS standard compression software.

1.6 Copy List (cc's and bcc's)

- The copy list is the list of people who receive official copies of correspondence.

- The notation “cc” stands for “carbon copy” and appears on the original outgoing correspondence.
- The notation “bcc” stands for “blind carbon copy” and does not appear on the original outgoing correspondence, only on file copies.
- The copy list can contain the names of individual persons, outside organizations, internal NPS offices listed by name, or internal NPS offices listed by orgcode or alphacode.
- A cc copy list should show the recipients aligned vertically. For recipients outside the NPS, titles or business affiliations should be shown. A bcc copy list can have all the recipients on one line of text.

1.7 Credit Line (Identification Information)

- The credit line does not appear on original outgoing correspondence, only on file copies.
- The credit line is typed below the copy list.
- The credit line includes the following, separated by colons:
  - Bureau
  - Author’s name
  - Typist initials
  - Date prepared
  - Telephone number, with area code
  - Controlled correspondence tracking number (if appropriate)

  Example- FNP:Jhaubert:mn:4/10/95:202-208-4290:98-03356
- The credit line is repeated when correspondence is revised or rewritten. In this case, credit line is preceded by the words “revised” or “rewritten.”
  Example- Revised: FNP:Jhaubert:mn:5/1/95:202-208-4290:98-03356

1.8 Inside Address, Salutation, Closings, and Titles

The following are offered as general guidelines. When in doubt about preferred forms of address, particularly for women, it is best to call the addressee’s office and ask their preference.

“The Honorable”. Use “The Honorable” when addressing all presidential appointees, Federal and State elected officials, U.S. attorneys, U.S. magistrates, and mayors.

Former officials. Persons once entitled to Governor, Judge, Senator, General, The Honorable, His Excellency, or similar distinctive titles, retain the title throughout their lifetimes.

Persons designated for office. If a person has been designated for an office but does not yet hold the position, address the person as (full title)-designate, for example, Secretary of Transportation-designate.

Private citizens. Use Dear Mr. or Ms., Mrs., or Miss (surname): in the salutation unless given other instructions.

Closings. "Sincerely" is used as the close for all letters except those addressed to the current President or Vice President, which are closed with "Respectfully".

Standard Salutation - Member of Congress
The Honorable (full name)
United States Senator or
Member, United States House of Representatives
Attn: (Name of staff member)

Gender Issues: If it is known, always address a woman the way she prefers, even though it may not be according to the general guidelines below. Guidelines for using gender-related titles have not yet become universal. For example, some women prefer Madam Chairman while others do not.

- **Ms., Mrs., or Miss.** Address a woman with the same title she used on the incoming correspondence. If she did not use any title, use Ms.
- **Female Members of Congress.** Use the title Senator for a woman member of the Senate and Representative for a woman member of the House of Representatives.
- **Using Madam.** Use Madam when a woman occupies a high-level position such as President, Vice President, Chairman (or equivalent), Secretary, Ambassador, or Minister unless she prefers something else.
- **Sex unknown.** If it is not known whether the addressee is a man or a woman, try to find out. Otherwise, omit the title. For example, use Leslie Doe.

The correct salutation would be for a woman president, her spouse, or a woman vice president is not known. Most likely the White House will determine the correct protocol should a woman be elected to one of those offices.

Common Models of Address, Salutation, and Close: The following models of address cover common NPS addressees and are reproduced for convenience. These have been adopted from the standards used by the General Services Administration. For other models, see GSA's website at http://www.gsa.gov/staff/c/ca/corres.htm.

Title	Inside Address	Salutation
The President	The President	Dear Mr. President:
Spouse of the President	Mrs. (full name)	Dear Mrs. (surname):
Assistant to the President	The Honorable (full name) Assistant to the President	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):

Former President	The Honorable (full name)	Dear President (surname):
The Vice President	The Vice President	Dear Mr. (surname):
Former Vice President	The Honorable (full name)	Dear Mr. (surname):
United States Senator	The Honorable (full name) United States Senate	Dear Senator (surname):
United States Representative	The Honorable (full name) House of Representatives or The Honorable (full name) Member, United States House of Representatives	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):
Committee Chairman	The Honorable (full name) Chairman, Committee on (name) United States Senate	Dear Mr. Chairman:
Subcommittee Chairman	The Honorable (full name) Chairman, Subcommittee on (name) (Name of parent Committee) United States Senate or House of Representatives	Dear Senator (surname): or Mr./Ms. (surname):
Speaker of the House of Representatives	The Honorable (full name) Speaker of the House of Representatives	Dear Mr./Ms. Speaker:
Cabinet Members	The Honorable (full name) Secretary of (name of Department)	Dear Mr./Ms. Secretary:
Deputy Secretaries, Assistants, or Under Secretaries	The Honorable (full name) Deputy (or Assistant or Under) Secretary of (name of Department)	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):
Heads of Independent Offices and Agencies	The Honorable (full name) Comptroller General of the United States General Accounting Office	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):
	or	
	The Honorable (full name) Chairman, (name of Commission)	Dear Mr./Ms. Chairman:
	or The Honorable (full name) Dear Mr./Ms. (surname): Director, Office of Management and Budget	
Librarian of Congress	Honorable (full name) Librarian of Congress	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):
Governor of State	Honorable (full name) Governor of (name of State)	Dear Governor (surname):
Lieutenant Governor	Honorable (full name) Lieutenant Governor of (name of State)	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):

State legislator	Honorable (full name) (name of State) Senate or House of Representatives (or Assembly or House of Delegates)	Dear Mr./Ms. (surname):
Mayor	Honorable (full name) Mayor of (name of City)	Dear Mayor (surname):
Service Personnel	(full grade, name, and abbreviation of service designation) (Retired is added, if applicable) (title and organization)	Dear (grade) (surname):

1.9 Surnames

- Surnaming is a process that indicates concurrence with the content of a document. It ensures that managers are provided an opportunity to participate in actions affecting their office. It also ensures that all written materials signed by the Director or Secretary reflect the National Park Service and Department speaking with one policy voice.
- Surnames should be placed on the top right hand corner of the official file copy (yellow copy), and should be dated.
- Offices preparing correspondence for signature at a higher level than their immediate office should route it through all intervening management levels.
- For correspondence that is being signed by the Secretary or elsewhere in the Department, the WAPC is responsible for obtaining any necessary departmental surnames as part of the controlled correspondence process.

If coordination or clearance with other agencies or departments is required, the Action Office should notify WAPC for assistance.

1.10 Electronic mail

Electronic mail is a form of written correspondence; it is simply correspondence in a non-paper medium. This means that it may be an official government record, and all laws, regulations and NPS policies and procedures pertaining to records apply to it. File codes should always be used on electronic mail used for official correspondence, or electronic mail that is otherwise of long-term importance.

The style of electronic mail differs slightly from that of paper in order to accommodate it as a medium. Section 1.3 shows basic electronic mail style. Director’s Order #5 contains the official NPS policy on use of electronic mail. In general, the following applies to electronic mail:

- Incoming correspondence that is received via electronic mail may be responded to using electronic mail.

- Electronic mail may be used for routine correspondence with organizations and partners with whom the National Park Service maintains very close relationships and with whom formal electronic mail interchanges have been established and are routinely used.
- Electronic mail should not be used for replies to correspondence that came in on paper or via fax, unless specifically requested by the author.
- Electronic mail must not be used to subvert or avoid standard routing procedures or signature protocols. The sender of the an official memorandum or other official document by electronic mail should not transmit it until it has been signed and he or she has the signed and dated original in hand.
- Electronic mail sent via Internet or through other mail services or gateways to external organizations must make it clear that it is from the National Park Service, and should always include the sender's full name, title, affiliation, and address within the body of the message.
- Official copies of memoranda and correspondence on electronic mail do not need to include a scanned version of the NPS letterhead. It should include a typed date (in lieu of a date stamp) and the words “Via Electronic Mail, No Hard Copy to Follow”. A typed version of the signature, such as “/s/ Betty Jones” should appear where the original was signed, along with the words “Signed original on file”.

1.11 Spelling, Hyphenation and Punctuation

The spelling and hyphenation used in Word, the NPS standard word-processing software, is accepted as standard for the NPS. For punctuation, abbreviations, capitalization, use of numbers and the like, any common style manual may be used, such as the Government Printing Office Style Manual or the Chicago Manual of Style.

Standard spelling for specialized NPS nomenclature is as follows:

Servicewide
Directorate (Field Directorate, Washington Directorate)

1.12 Acronyms

All acronyms should be written out the first time they appear. Every effort should be made to avoid the use of acronyms that are not commonly used outside the Department and the NPS, particularly in outside correspondence.

The acronym NPS does not need to appear in parenthesis or in quotations after its first appearance in a piece of correspondence or memorandum. After the National Park Service has been referred to in a letter, any later reference to NPS will be understood. The same is true with Department as shorthand for the Department of the Interior, and Service as shorthand for the National Park Service. This style has been required for correspondence signed at the Department level since 1995.

2.0 Instructions for Specific Correspondence Types

2.1 Drafts

Often, when handling controlled correspondence, you may be asked to prepare a draft of a letter that will be put into final signature form in WASO, (in the Correspondence Unit of the Washington Administrative Program Center). Section 3, Controlled Correspondence Process, describes the process in detail. The following instructions apply to draft replies:

- Drafts should always be sent as electronic word-processing files using email. Hard copies and faxes are not required.
- Focus on the body of the letter; addressing and signature blocks are not required.
- Surnames and surnaming dates should be typed at the top of the file.
- The name and phone number of the author should be provided in case there are questions.

2.2 Director's Correspondence (in Final)

The following rules apply to all paper correspondence signed by the Director or Deputy Directors:

- The style for letters or memoranda in section 1.1 and 1.2 must be followed.
- Must be on National Park Service letterhead.
- Use plain white bond for continuation pages.
- Use "we" or "the National Park Service".
- The signature block on letters (not used on memoranda) is left justified and follows the style:

  Sincerely,
  (four blank lines)
  (Director's name typed)
  Director

- If the incoming correspondence was originally addressed to the Secretary, another bureau, or other non-NPS office, replies should be phrased as follows: "On behalf of…" or "Your letter to (name) has been referred to the National Park Service for reply."

2.3 Secretarial Correspondence in Final (including Deputy and Assistant Secretaries)

If signed by the Secretary, correspondence must include the following:

- The style for letters in section 1.1 must be followed.
- Must be on the Secretary of the Interior letterhead.
- Use plain white bond for continuation pages.
- Use "I" or "the Department" as subject nouns.
- For the Secretary's signature, the signature block should be centered on the page and formatted as follows:
  Sincerely,
  (four blank lines)
  (name is NOT typed)
- For a Deputy Secretary's signature, the signature block should be centered on the page and formatted as follows:
  Sincerely,
  (four blank lines)
  (name IS typed)
- Correspondence to be signed by the Secretary that is longer than two pages must be accompanied by a formal cover memorandum summarizing the issue and explaining why it has been prepared for the Secretary's signature.
-
- For the final signature package
- Secretary's File copy- designated the official file copy and contains the official surname ladder printed on the right side. All original surnames must be maintained with this copy.
- Executive Secretariat (ES) copies- ES requires FOUR SETS of the response. EACH SET contains copies of the following:
  - Outgoing response
  - Copy of surname ladder
  - Tasking profile
  - Incoming letter

2.4 Congressional Correspondence in Final

When replying to members of Congress or Congressional committees, the following procedures apply:

- The Washington Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs must review prior to sending: 1) all correspondence sent to the Washington offices of Congressional members or committees; and 2) correspondence with members' district offices that involves substantive policy or controversial issues.
- The Washington Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs should be sent a courtesy copy of any Congressional correspondence that they did not review prior to sending.
- When writing to the field office of a member of Congress, a copy should be sent to the member's Washington office, and a notation "Copy to your Washington, DC office" placed on the bottom of the field office original.

- If a letter from a member of Congress has been signed by a staffer, you still need to address the reply to the member, as if he or she had made the initial inquiry. If an "attention" notation is needed, place it ONLY on the envelope.
- If a letter is received that is signed by more than one Member of Congress:
  - Address an original reply to each member
  - State in the opening or closing paragraph that an identical letter is being sent to each member who cosigned the letter.
  - Make only one set of file copies with distribution copies and notation as follows: "SIMILAR LETTERS SENT TO:"
- Some Congressional correspondence consists of a letter originally to the Congressperson from a constituent, that is then forwarded by the member. In this situation:
  - In the reply, thank the member for his inquiry on behalf of the constituent in regard to the specific issue.
  - Address the reply to the member of Congress rather than to the constituent unless specifically requested otherwise.

3. Controlled Correspondence Process

3.1 What is controlled correspondence?

As defined in Director's Order 5, controlled correspondence is correspondence that has been designated by the Secretary or the Director as important enough to warrant tracking. The Correspondence Unit of the Washington Administrative Program Center (WAPC), under the Associate Director for Administration, does this central tracking work.

3.2 How is the mail sorted and who does it?

The WAPC receives all mail addressed to the Director, National Park Service. It also receives mail from the Executive Secretariat Office (Exec Sec) in the Office of the Secretary. Exec Sec forwards to the WAPC correspondence that has been received in the Department that they have determined that the National Park Service should handle.

Mail that arrives in the WAPC is opened, examined, and sorted into one of two types. Important mail that requires a response is designated as "controlled", and enters the controlled correspondence tracking process. Not-so-important mail (also called "Action as Appropriate" mail) is forwarded directly to a park, region, or program office and is not tracked by the WAPC.

3.3 Which mail becomes controlled correspondence?

- All correspondence from members of Congress and Congressional committees and subcommittees.
- All correspondence from the White House, including the offices of the President and Vice President.
- Correspondence from other federal government agencies, state government agencies, local governments.
- Freedom of Information Act and Privacy Act requests.
- Letters of inquiry from the general public if directed to the Director or the Secretary.

The mail forwarded by Exec Sec in the Department has already been sorted into controlled and "action as appropriate" categories. The WAPC determines if any of the "action as appropriate" mail needs to be tracked.

3.4 Which mail does not get controlled?

- General letters of comment from the public that do not ask a question.
- Issue-specific mass mailings, such as tear-off postcards or form letters.

All of these are sent to the appropriate program office or park for their information. They may respond to them if they wish.

- Mail to the Director of a social nature, such as invitations
- Routine ceremonial mail (such as requests for Eagle Scout congratulatory letters).

This mail is forwarded to the Director's personal secretary for action.

3.5 What happens to controlled correspondence in Washington?

The WAPC staff enters basic descriptive information into the Correspondence Tracking System. This is used to print a Tasking Profile that is attached to the correspondence. The correspondence is then sent to a Correspondence Analyst, depending on which program office or NPS region it involves.

The analyst reviews the correspondence and makes any necessary corrections or changes to the tasking profile. He or she then sends the correspondence to the appropriate regional correspondence contact or WASO associate director's office. This office is designated as the "Action Office".

3.6 Who answers controlled correspondence?

All offices and parks across the Service answer correspondence, depending on the subject. The job of the WAPC (and of regional correspondence coordinators) is to distribute correspondence to the location that has the most knowledge about the subject and can provide the best and most accurate response. The Action Office may be asked to answer the correspondence directly, or to draft a response for signature at a higher management level.

3.7 What happens to controlled correspondence once it gets to the Action Office?

The Action Office assigns an appropriate park, individual, or program office to prepare a draft or a final response.

3.8 What if the correspondence doesn't belong in my office?

First, are you sure that your office is not the right one? Often questions will come in about programs or activities that have been closed down or don't exist. Your office may be the best (or only) one to assert that there is no such program or activity in the NPS, and to give information about what other organization may be able to assist. Often people will have several different questions in the same letter; your office may be the best one to coordinate a response.

If you are sure that the correspondence has been misrouted, return the correspondence (hand-carry) or contact the WAPC right away. Provide the name and phone number of the person in the office who reviewed the correspondence and determined that it had been misrouted. The WAPC analyst may need to contact this person for help in finding the right office. Returning the correspondence with no explanation and no contact person is not acceptable.

3.9 Does all controlled correspondence require a written response?

No. Depending on the type of correspondence, some controlled correspondence will be designated as "Action as appropriate". "Action as appropriate" mail may be answered with a written response, phone call, meeting, or not answered, at the discretion of the Action Office.

3.10 How much time do I have to respond to controlled correspondence?

Due dates are assigned on the by the WAPC on the Tasking Profile. In general, drafts for responses from the Secretary and Deputy Secretary should be completed in two days, and those for the Director's signature in four days. For most correspondence sent directly from the Action Office, the response time is two weeks.

By law, FOIAs need to be responded to within 20 working days. See FOIA instructions or your FOIA officer for details.

3.11 I can't put together a full response in time. Should I use an interim reply?

YES. Offices should utilize an interim reply when long delays (usually more than twenty working days) are anticipated. Interim replies should do the following:

- Acknowledge receipt of the incoming letter
- State why the final response will be delayed
- Identify approximately when the final response can be expected

Interim replies do not require surnames. All interim replies to correspondence that will eventually be signed at the Secretarial or Assistant Secretarial level should be for the signature of the Assistant Secretary.

3.12 I've been assigned to prepare a draft response for the Secretary's signature. What do I do?

- Compose the body of the letter, making certain to address all of the points in the correspondence. If you would like to include the greeting and signature portions of the letter, you may do so, but it is not required.
- Send the draft to the correspondence analyst shown on the tasking profile. The draft should be sent via email in NPS standard word processing software. If necessary, drafts can be faxed.

3.13 Who is responsible for proofreading outgoing correspondence?

The Action Office is responsible for proofreading all correspondence for content, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

3.14 How does Secretarial correspondence get signed (and why does it take so long)?

Correspondence to be signed by the Secretary (or associates or deputies) comes to the WAPC as a draft. The draft response goes through the standard surnaming process, through the Director. It is then returned to the WAPC. The WAPC is responsible for obtaining departmental surnames.

For materials to be signed by the Secretary or Assistant Secretary, the WAPC makes a folder with a separate copy of the approved response and the original incoming letter for each individual who must surname the letter. These folders are hand carried to the surnamers, who are asked to surname or indicate changes within 48 hours. If a surnamer refuses to clear, he or she must submit dissenting views in writing to APC stating the reason (s) for nonconcurrence. The APC will then contact the appropriate Action Office to coordinate a rewrite if necessary.

3.15 What if my correspondence needs to be coordinated with or surnamed by another bureau or agency?

If coordination or clearance with other agencies or departments is required, the Action Office should notify the correspondence analyst in WAPC.